

# **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND GROWTH STUDY FOR AN ESPORTS AND GAMING BUSINESS**

Case: Company X

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## Abstract

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<b>Social media marketing and growth study for an esports and gaming business</b>		
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<p>The topic of this thesis is social media marketing and growth study for an esports and gaming businesses. One of the authors worked as an intern in the case company, on whose gathered statistics and material the research is based. The objective of this thesis is to find out how well the tests done in the case company's social media performed and how those could be improved.</p> <p>Two different studies were conducted: a study analysing the performance of a game video clip series and contest posts published on Instagram and a quantitative survey study conducted on the target group. The purpose of the survey was to find out the opinions of people interested in esports and gaming, as well as what they consider important in the content of a game-related social media channel.</p> <p>During the time of the research, the company's Instagram channel grew by 88,10% in followers.</p> <p>The research allows us to make conclusions on how social media content and material could be improved to be more engaging and follower friendly.</p>		
Keywords		
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## Tiivistelmä

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Työn nimi <b>Social media marketing and growth study for an esports and gaming business</b> Case: Company X		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Tämän opinnäytetyön aiheena on sosiaalisen median markkinointi, sekä kehitysehdo- tuksien teko e-urheilu ja peli yritykselle. Toinen opinnäytetyön kirjoittajista on suoritta- nut työharjoittelun kohdeyrityksessä, jonka tilastoihin ja aineistoihin tässä työssä teh- dyt tutkimukset perustuvat. Opinnäytteen tarkoituksena on selvittää, kuinka kohdeyri- tyksen sosiaalisen median kanavilla suoritettut tutkimukset toimivat ja kuinka niitä voisi parantaa.</p> <p>Kohdeyrityksen Instagramissa suoritettiin kaksi erilaista tutkimusta, ensimmäisessä tutkimuksessa analysoitiin Instagramissa julkaistujen pelivideoklippisarjojen ja kilpailu- jen tuloksia/sitoutuneisuutta. Teimme myös kvantitatiivinen kyselytutkimuksen kohde- ryhmälle. Kyselytutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää e-urheilusta ja pelaamisesta kiinnostuneiden henkilöiden mielipiteitä, sekä mitä he pitävät tärkeänä peliaiheisen sosiaalisen median kanavan sisällössä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen aikana yrityksen Instagram seuraaja määrä kasvoi 88,10%.</p> <p>Tutkimuksista voitiin tehdä päätelmät, joiden perusteella somekanavalla julkaistavaa materiaalia voidaan parantaa sekä luoda sisältöä, josta kanavan seuraajat pitävät.</p>		
Asiasanat Sosiaalinen media, Elektroninen Urheilu, E-urheilu, Digimarkkinointi, Brändi		

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to research how social media marketing works and how we used it to improve company X's social media channels content.

This thesis will also go through different marketing methods and analyse how the chosen methods worked. One of the thesis author's worked as an intern in company X during the fall of 2019, where his job included social media maintenance and marketing.

This paper will go through many of the main social media channels that an esports and gaming company and its audience use. However, to keep the contents concise, we will only include the social media channels that were used by company X, which were Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Discord.

The thesis work is done for the previously mentioned company X. The company is an esports company that specializes in esports events and the world of esports. Esports are electronic sports, a sport that is played with an electronic device, such as PC, gaming console, mobile phone, et cetera. Esports has been growing in popularity, especially since 2016. In 2018 the global esports revenues reached 906 million USD, and the yearly growth was +38,2% (Newzoo 2018).

Much of this work is based on the internship and social media management that one of the authors did during their internship. The goal of this research is to find out how the used methods worked and what didn't.

The research method used in this thesis is mostly quantitative, but also one qualitative question will be asked in the survey.

Also, we are going to take a look at how social media marketing as a whole could be improved for the company. During the internship, two different studies were conducted on the target company's Instagram. We analysed the results of the game video clip series published on Instagram and took a look at how the held Instagram contests did. Also, a quantitative survey was conducted on the target audience. The purpose of the survey was to find out their preferences when it comes to content in gaming-related social media.

In this work, the target audience was people who are interested in video games and electronic sports. The target audience age goes from 13 to 30 years old. We believed this target group to be most likely to use the company's services and follow their channels.

The research question that we are looking to answer for this thesis is: "How to improve social media content to make it more appealing to followers."

During this work, we are going to go through certain areas and topics that are important when it comes to understanding digital marketing and social media management. Firstly, we will talk about digital and social media marketing, what it is, some important aspects of it, and some examples of how marketing works. We are also talking about different social media channels, which are essential and in use by the case company. As the company is based in Finland, we are researching the use of social media in Finland. Brand and brand management is an important aspect of successful digital and social media marketing, so this topic will be briefly covered in its own chapter during the thesis as well.

## 2 DIGITAL- AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Digitalization has changed the way businesses and companies do marketing nowadays. Digitalization is converting information, such as images, sounds, and documents into a digital form. (Rouse 2007.)

In this digital time, companies must know how to operate and use different social media platforms for their advantage, as social media is a great way to communicate with a broad audience in real-time. Through social media, companies can advertise, transmit data, do questionnaires, and interact in many ways with their target audience and customers.

There are three main reasons people are on social media: to be informed, entertained, and connected. It is up to social media marketers to mix and match these aspects to best communicate the brand of the company.

Digital marketing is marketing done through various digital channels, including but not limited to the Internet, apps, virtual billboard ads, search result ads, search engine optimization (SEO), email, and promoted content on social media (Financial Times 2015).

Digital marketing has made it easier to reach customers where they spend much of their time, but customers' standards have also gotten higher. Traditional outbound marketing, where businesses push their product at customers, is no longer trusted, and the use of more personalized marketing has become necessary. Inbound marketing is, as the name suggests, the opposite of outbound marketing, and it focuses on understanding the target group, its wants, and needs and provides solutions that bring actual value to the customer, in order to create trust. (Alexander 2020.)

Content Marketing is when businesses create content besides their main product, in order to bring value to the customer. This kind of content can include blog posts, eBooks, entertaining and useful videos, etc. For example, the original Marvel comics were created as content marketing for the action figures to have a richer background story. Soon after the comic books had hit the stores, 20% of their target group had purchased the action figures, and these days there is no need to explain how huge the brand has gotten and there is no point in wondering whether it was financially a smart move to put the focus on the customers and coming up with ways to cater to their interests. DC, which is a competitor of Marvel, but not quite as big, makes over 4 billion annually, solely through merchandise. As Neil Patel put it, "yelling louder won't help you anymore, only yelling better things will." (Patel 2020.)

Not everyone can or needs to be like Marvel however, but there are ways every business can up their value in their customer's eyes. Writing blog posts to answer questions your followers are struggling with or interested in, for example, is a simple way to engage with your customer, bring them value, show your expertise, and thus up your credibility.

When it comes to social media marketing, it is essential to have an understanding of the people who use the application. When you have the knowledge of the demographics of social media, it helps you understand how to proceed with your marketing.

Who is your target audience? It is an important question that you need to ask yourself. All the time you use marketing and advertising to the wrong people in the wrong channels is time wasted, which you didn't apply for effective marketing. In the long run, this can become expensive for your company.

In social media marketing, being able to test, analyse, adjust, and repeat is detrimental to success and staying relevant. There are many shortened terms and metrics used in social media marketing to be considered. Here is a simple look at some of the most central ones:

- ROI = Return on Investment. Indicates how well the campaign performed and whether your monetary investment yielded the desired results. Expressed as a percentage. Calculated as:  $(\text{The sales from a campaign} - \text{the cost of running the campaign}) / \text{cost to run the campaign} \times 100$  (Beattie 2020).

Example: A company invests 1000€ on an Instagram campaign. It yields 3000€ in sales; its ROI is 200%.  $(3000 - 1000) / 1000 \times 100 = 200\%$ .

- CAC = Customer Acquisition Cost. How much it costs to get a customer. Expressed as monetary value. Calculated as:  $\text{Total marketing expenses} + \text{total sales expenses} / \text{number of new customers acquired}$  (Chen 2020).

Example: If a company spent a 100€ on marketing during a month and acquired 100 customers during that time, their CAC is 1€.  $100€ / 100 = 1€$ .

- CLV = Customer Lifetime Value. How much value does the customer bring in a certain amount of time? Perhaps they purchase a subscription or purchase your product multiple times, bringing high value to the amount you invested in bringing them in as a customer. Expressed as monetary value. Calculated as:  $\text{margin} \times (\text{retention rate} / [1 + \text{discount rate} - \text{retention rate}])$  (Sharapa 2019).



- KPI = Key Performance Indicator. It can refer to the overall performance of a business or be applied to more specific fields like marketing. In social media marketing, these include reach, impressions, advocacy, loyalty, ROI, CPC, CPM, etc. Essentially, it's what can be measured to determine whether a goal has been reached successfully.
- CPC = Cost per Click. How much you're paying when someone clicks on your link or ad. If you make good ads that yield engagement, Facebook rewards you with lower CPC and CPM costs. Expressed as monetary value. Calculated as: advertising cost / number of clicks (Google Ads Help 2020).
- CPM = Cost per Mille. How much you're paying for 1000 clicks. CPC and CPM are common indicators of how well your promotion has performed. Expressed as monetary value. Calculated as: advertising cost / number of impressions x 1000 (Wiki-How 2020).
- CTR = Click-through-rate. How many people clicked on an ad or a link out of all the people that saw it. Expressed as a percentage. Calculated as: (total clicks / impressions) x 100 (Google Ads Help 2020).

In order to keep operations running smoothly, every company should regularly set goals for themselves that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely. Also known as SMART goals (Schrader 2018).

## 2.1 A Customers Journey to Purchase

When customers make a purchase, they don't just magically get the idea and immediately execute the transaction. Generally, there are stages to the process, which businesses can attempt to make as smooth as possible for the customer to get them to follow-through to purchasing your product. These stages are often referred to as the AIDA process. The acronym consisting of Attention, Interest, Desire, and finally, Action (Hanlon 2019).

The outcome of a sale always starts with the customer becoming aware of your brand or product. This is where you make sure your brand is strong enough to stand out and stick to people's minds and create brand awareness campaigns to make your name known. In fact, most people have already mentally made the decision even before they do research. They have a brand in mind, and often times it is the one they end up settling on. This is why creating a strong brand is so important. How a brand makes the customer feel trumps much of the various technical aspects, different buying options have to offer, and in the

end, people are very good at rationalizing to themselves why their favorite brand is the best pick, regardless of how it actually performs against competitors' products.

The second stage is the customer having the interest to purchase a certain product, at which point efforts on the previous stage should pay off, and they might recall your company brand, or they wish to compare and do research online, as well as ask for recommendations from friends. This is where Google ads are a great tool, appearing at the top of the search for a product or service you sell. Other social media ads, with the goal of conversion, also are appealing to people in this stage. Search Engine Optimization determines how high up on the search results your website will appear. Using the right keywords on your pages can multiply the traffic on your website. Use tools such as Google's Keyword Planner in Google Ads or Neil Patel's free alternative Ubersuggest to find the right keywords to guide people to your site.

After having done some research and weighed their options, they now have the desire to make the purchase, and it is your job to make the transition to the final stage: Action, a.k.a. making the purchase as smooth as possible. In fact, much of the success of businesses is based on the smoothness of moving through all these stages. Companies should have steps taken on each stage to guide them to the next, and A/B testing should be implemented regularly on each aspect of each step to keep fine-tuning the process.

Especially online where everything is at the mercy of the customer, you need to be able to cater to their needs. Always ask yourself: What kind of post won't be a nuisance to the viewer, but solves a problem or otherwise brings genuine value to them? Will the person easily find what they were looking for on your landing page? What are people searching for on search engines? What problems can I solve for them? How effortless is it for a customer to go from considering buying a product to finalized purchase? Or to sign-up for an email newsletter? Are there steps that are unnecessary? Can the person visiting your website almost instantaneously know they've come to the right place? It's in these kinds of questions, where the answers to great marketing lie. It's the companies that can best answer these questions and come up with new ways of streamlining these actions for people, that find the most success in acquiring and retaining customers. It's why for example, hotels have invested in applications that have simple and easy to use interfaces that take you through the booking process to signing in, changes into your room key as you approach the right room, allows you to order room service, to sign-out and give feedback. The investment in good customer experience is perhaps the most worthwhile investment any company can make.

### 2.1.1 A/B testing

A/B testing is an easy and effective way of testing what your audience responds to and how to best promote on social media. In A/B testing a subject of testing is chosen; say you want to test the efficiency of your call-to-action button (can be added to ads or home page, it encourages the action you wish for the viewer to take, for example: “learn more,” “download app” or “book now” and takes the person clicking it to complete suggested action). After choosing the subject to be tested, you make two versions of it; a call-to-action button that has a different way of suggesting the wanted action or uses a different color, for example. Then these two slightly different versions are shown to the same target audience for a set period of time, and after their performances can be compared and conclusions of what works, what doesn’t and why can be drawn. This kind of testing can be applied to almost everything, and it is a great way to hone your marketing and make it seamless. This can easily be done through Facebook Business Manager, through which Instagram promotions can be managed as well.

For this thesis, we will be focusing specifically on social media marketing and brand building. The social media avenues we have utilized in our thesis are the following: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Discord. These specific channels have been chosen to introduce in this work as they are the most important communication channels for the case company. One other major social media platform among gamers is the video broadcasting platform YouTube, but it won’t be taken into a closer look in this work since it is quite different from the other social media platforms mentioned earlier and wasn’t a part of the research we conducted on company X’s social media accounts. Each platform has its unique characteristics and functions, which we will go over in some more detail now.

## 2.2 Instagram

Instagram will be the most explained and researched social media during this work since Instagram was used in both researches, which will be analysed later during the work.

The word “Instagram” should be familiar to everyone, even if you don’t happen to be using the application. Instagram is a social media platform where you can share pictures and videos with other people. The application was released in the year 2010. Two years later, Facebook bought Instagram for around one-billion dollars. (Koskinen 2012.)

Instagram is a hugely popular application all around the world. In June 2018, the app was used by over one-billion users (Constine 2018).

When doing marketing on Instagram, it is good to remember that around 70% of the users are under 35 years old (Statista 2019).

For companies, Instagram is a fantastic place to do marketing, since, according to research, around half of the Instagram users are following at least one company's Instagram channel (Mohsim 2020).

Then why should companies use Instagram for marketing? Instagram's user base is large and constantly growing; because of this, it offers companies a great way to reach a big amount of potential customers and people who are interested in the company. According to research made by Facebook, 83% of Instagram users have found new products and services by using the app. (Facebook for Business 2020.)

### 2.2.1 Instagram stories

Instagram story is a part of the Instagram application where you can share pictures and videos that will remove themselves after 24-hours.

For a company, Instagram Stories is a great tool to activate, contact, and advertise for the customer. For example, a company can use Instagram stories to let their followers know about a new post they have made. Another advantage of Instagram stories is their placement. They appear at the top of the feed, so even if a user doesn't scroll through all the new posts on their feed, they are likely to notice a new story as soon as they open the application.

### 2.2.2 Instagram algorithm

The Instagram algorithm is the formula that Instagram uses to run its app. The algorithm decides what kinds of posts will do well on the app. For a social media marketer, it is very important to know at least the basics of Instagram's algorithm.

Before July 2016, Instagram used a so-called: "reverse chronological feed" algorithm. The reverse-chronological feed means that you see the post in the order they were posted. This affected that many of Instagram's users missed almost 70 percent of all the posts and almost 50 percent of their friends' posts. This, however, changed after Instagram changed their algorithm and system, to push certain posts higher on the feed. (Constine 2018.)

The new system has three main ways of prioritizing the feed:

1. Interest

Instagram tries to predict how much you like certain content. This means that Instagram predicts how big the chance is that you will like, comment, share, or save the post that is shown to you. This is based on your likes, comments, and saves.

2. Recency

A.k.a. how new the post is. Instagram tries to show you more new posts than old posts.

3. Relationship

How close you are with the person who posts the picture. Instagram lets you assign some of your friends as “close friends,” which means that their posts and stories are always prioritized in your feed.

(Constine 2018.)

Also, the following three points need to be taken into consideration when doing Instagram marketing:

1. Frequency

How often you use Instagram. The application tries to show all the “best” posts that have been posted after the last time you used the app.

2. Following

If you follow many people, Instagram has to choose from all of these accounts, which posts it will show you.

3. Usage

How much time you spend on Instagram. This affects the posts that Instagram shows you. If you just spend a short while on the app, it will show you the best posts from a certain period of time. If you, on the other hand, spend a lot of time on the app, it will show you the popular newer posts, assuming you have already seen the “older” ones.

(Constine 2018.)

So, in a nutshell, the more time you spend on the app, the more new posts you will see.

Instagram's algorithm tries to make people spend as much time on the application as possible.

To summarize, the Instagram algorithm knows what is a good post and what is not. It does this based on post views, likes, comments, and saves. If all these are high, rather quickly after the post has been published, it is more likely that Instagram will show the post to more users. (Constine 2018.)

Finally, here is a list of some of the aspects Instagram has to offer companies as a marketing platform, to help you compare the different social media applications:

- 500 million daily active users and 1 billion slightly more seldomly active users
- Instagram shows a great engagement rate, meaning people interact with the site through likes, shares, uploads, etc. It is second only to Facebook
- The majority of Instagram users (71%) are in the age group of 34 or under
- On average, users of the app spend 53 minutes on it daily
- 71% of all businesses in the United States utilize Instagram for marketing
- Instagram is a great place for marketing your product or service, as 80% of its users have reportedly said to have bought something upon seeing it on Instagram. Additionally, Instagram is a major influence in finding new products and services, with 83% of Instagram users reportedly having found new interests and intriguing brands through Instagram
- Half a billion accounts share stories on Instagram daily, approximately 33% of the most popular ones being from businesses
- Half of Instagram's users have businesses among their followed list
- Instagram has four times the engagement rate of likes, shares, clicks, etc., compared to Facebook

(Mohsin 2020.)

- In Finland, the use of Instagram grew by around 5% in 2019, and the rise is continuing to grow. Between genders, there is still some difference since from all the Finnish Instagram users between the age of 13 to 64, 62% are women, and the rest are men

(Meltwater 2019.)

## 2.3 Facebook

Since its launch in 2004, until today, Facebook has been a hit. Its number of active monthly users has steadily kept rising throughout its existence, and it is the most popular social media platform in the world, with 2.45 billion users, as of 2019. It earned a revenue of 17.65 billion USD in the third quarter of 2019. (Statista 2019.)

Facebook started as a way for Harvard students to stay in touch with each other and share information, but it quickly spread beyond the campus (Nicholas 2010). Facebook users can post pictures, videos, and text about themselves and their daily lives on their profile. They can request other users as their friends, and after they accept, the users will see each other's posts on the feed, on their front page. Users can also join groups and follow companies, organizations, and influencers' Facebook pages and see their posts on their feed. Users can then react to these posts by liking them, sharing them on their feed, or commenting on the post. This is a convenient- and, at the time of its launch, a new way of staying connected to interests, friends, and family. (Pönkä 2015, 251-253.) Easy sign-up, availability in numerous languages, and simple interface lower the threshold to join the free platform. (Juslen 2013,17-19.)

There are currently 140 million businesses using Facebook to connect with their customers and reach new ones (Facebook 2019).

The business page of Facebook looks pretty much the same as a personal profile, but it provides some useful insight for the business, about the visitors of the page, and their behaviour. The Insight tab shows different statistics about customer behaviour on your page.

Statistics like:

- How many people your post reached
- How many people it engaged, in other words, how many people took action upon seeing your post by liking it, commenting on it, sharing it, or clicking on a link
- It helps you narrow down your demographic by showing what age groups, gender, or locations they belong to, among other things
- You can see how your page has done over time and what kinds of posts are most favoured by your demographic

(Facebook Business 2019.)

### 2.3.1 Facebook algorithm

Just like on Instagram, the order in which the feed is shown is determined by an algorithm that weighs different factors of a post and relates them to users and their behavior on Facebook, in an attempt to prioritize posts most relevant to each user.

These factors include:

- Number of shares (either on one's feed or through Messenger; Facebook's own messaging app), likes, and reactions
- What time and by whom the post was made
- Average time spent on the post and how informative it is
- Replying to comments

The algorithm favours posts that encourage interaction. Posts that start conversations in the comments section and are shared a lot get more exposure. Therefore, it is suitable for companies to consider how to make people talk about your post before posting. Make a call-for-action in the post, for example, by asking for people's opinions on something about the post, encourage them to tag a friend, or whatever else suits the format of the post. (Boyd 2019.)

Also, the content in a post is weighted differently, according to how they tend to gain engagement:

1. Links
2. Videos
3. Text
4. Pictures

(Digimarkkinointi.fi 2020.)

Useful statistics about Facebook for social media marketers to help compare the different social media platforms:

- Facebook is undefeated in its reach of internet users, with 60,6%, in 2018
- 2.7 billion active users monthly and 2.1 billion daily
- Facebook has already been established as a good marketing platform for businesses by 80 million of them, and it is used as a marketing tool by 86% of marketers in the US



- 57% male users, 43% female
- 65% of users are in the age group of under 35 years old
- The site was accessed through a mobile device 96% of the time instead of a desktop, which implies that Facebook is used as a pastime to fill time between other tasks. For this kind of media, it is effective to make your ads and other marketing strategies simple and straight to the point, as an average user won't give much time for individual posts as they are scrolling through their feed
- An average user spends about 58.5 minutes on the social media platform per day (Maryam 2019.)
- During the year 2019, the number of Finnish users has gone down by 3%, and Facebook has around 2,7 million Finnish users. Facebook has an older userbase when compared to other social media (excluding Twitter), and the use of Facebook is growing within the people aged 45 and higher (Meltwater 2019.)

## 2.4 Twitter

Twitter is a social community site where you can post 280 characters worth of text. Along with this, pictures and videos can be posted. Hashtags can be used, so people with the same interest can find your tweet, and you can join a bigger conversation. Because of the character cap, Twitter is an ideal place for staying up to date on various interests and current events, with minimal skimming through various articles and sites. As of 2019, Twitter has 330 million active monthly users. (Ying 2019.)

Twitter is an effective marketing tool for companies and influential figures, as it creates a sense of connectedness between followers and the followed, due to its personable nature. It's good for building and communicating your brand, through sharing your thoughts, values, projects, products, interests, etc. (Gil 2019.)

Like any other social media, Twitter uses algorithms to prioritize the tweets it shows you. In addition to tweets from followers, Twitter will occasionally suggest accounts to follow, events, popular trends, and hashtags based on your interests. Unlike many other social media platforms, though, Twitter offers an alternative unfiltered feed, that gives you the option to see all tweets in real-time, with no algorithm prioritization.

The signals Twitter's algorithm uses to prioritize tweets include:

- How recently the post was made

- Engagement rate
  - How influential the poster is and how engaging the tweet is relative to their other posts
  - Your engagement with a type of media (picture, gif, video) is prioritized
  - Posts from your location are prioritized
  - Number of followers and activity rate
- (Katie 2019.)

To conclude, here are useful statistics about Twitter to compare against the other social media platforms talked about previously:

- 330 million monthly active users and 134 million daily active users
- The majority of Twitter users are in the age group of 35-65 years old, at 65%, which makes the social network app unique in its mass appeal for a more mature audience
- Twitter's demographic is dominantly male, at 66%
- It can be affirmed that a lot of Twitter's appeal lies in its ability to provide a quick flood of information and entertainment. On average, its users spend no more than 3.39 minutes on the site at a time. Take this into account to best communicate your message and keep in mind that if the message is too long or not captivating enough, it can easily be scrolled by
- Twitter has kept its downloads on the Apple App Store steadily high over the years, with 11.7 million downloads in the first quarter of 2019
- Twitter is a popular marketing tool among B2B businesses, as 67% of them use it
- Some 5.7 thousand tweets per second are sent out daily. 500 million per day. This alone speaks volumes of the popularity of Twitter but also poses a challenge in standing out in the constant tsunamis of information and chatter. Thankfully the site also makes it easy to filter out the things users have no interest in and find topics of interest and significance at any given moment
- 20% of all internet users in the United States, use Twitter regularly
- According to the Digital Marketing Institute, 40% of Twitter users have proceeded to buy a product upon seeing an ad, a promotion, or something of the like, for it on Twitter

(Ying 2019.)

- Among the Finnish Twitter users, there were over 700 thousand tweets and readers (Meltwater 2019).

## 2.5 TikTok

Created by the Chinese company ByteDance in 2006, TikTok has become the fastest growing social media site, with 500 million active monthly users and the number one spot as the most downloaded app (on Apple's App Store) in 2019.

TikTok allows users to make short videos, adding text, music, filters, and other effects to create fun and creative content to share with friends, family, and the world. Like in all social media, you can follow other users to be updated on their posts on your front page.

If your customer segment is in the age group of 16-24 and you are planning to expand to the Asian market, TikTok is an ideal means to crossover, as 41% of the app's users are in this age group, and the majority of active users are in Asia (China, Japan, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam). (Maryam 2019.)

Here are some useful things to have in mind if you are planning to use TikTok in marketing:

- 500 million active users worldwide
- Grew 70% in new users from quarter 1 of 2018 to quarter 1 of 2019, with 188 million new users, making it the 3rd most downloaded app
- On Apple's App Store, it was the most downloaded app in the first quarter of 2019, surpassing YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, with 33 million downloads
- Users are 56% male, 44% female
- On average TikTok users spend about 52 minutes on the app daily
- Available in 155 countries
- Attracts continuous use, with 90% of TikTok users accessing the app multiple times a day
- Despite the bulk of TikTok's users being from Asian countries, it is currently showing major growth in the US market as well. From October of 2017 to March of

2019, the number of adult US users multiplied 5.5 times, from 2,6 million to 14,3 million

- In 2018, TikTok users viewed over 1 billion videos per day

(Maryam 2019.)

## 2.6 Discord

Compared to most social media, like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, Discord is a bit different in how it works.

Discord is a social media platform, which was initially designed to serve and help people who are interested in gaming, to communicate and talk with their friends. It can be essentially described as the “skype for gamers.” (Melcon 2019.)

Discord was released in March 2015, and in May 2019, it had over 250 million registered users (Coberly 2019.)

Discord has applications for desktop and mobile devices, and the users can communicate via text and orally.

Discord is also a great place to find people to play games with. However, the application is not just for gamers. You can find any servers that are focused on different topics, such as music, bands, movies, fan groups, and many more.

When looking at Discord from the marketing and communication angle, it can be said that Discord is a great tool to use for marketing and communication for a specific group. For example, the case company has its own Discord server and community, with over 1000 users on it. If the company has something that they need to communicate with the users, they can post it to the Discord server. It is a fast and relatively effortless way to talk about topics important to its users.

For this thesis, Discord was utilized as a place to share our survey about esports. The already mentioned case company’s discord server will be used for this survey to get the attention of people who are interested in the topic.

### 3 BRAND AND BRAND MANAGEMENT

A well-thought-out brand is essential for any company or business' success. A brand is what makes your company unique, how you communicate, what your company values are, how you visually present yourself etc. It can even be characterized as the personality of a company. If you manage to build a good, well-known brand for your company, it means that whenever a person sees your company's logo, they instantly, perhaps subconsciously associate it with a feeling or a way of life and think of your products. An excellent example of a great brand would be Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola's red color has become iconic, and people associate it with sharing a refreshing moment- and spending time with loved ones. This is because, from the start of Coca-Cola 134 years ago, they have kept these values at the core of everything they put out. Coca-Cola is a rare famous brand that doesn't have a set slogan, but the two more recent ones: "Taste the feeling" and "Open happiness" clearly communicate the sentimentality the brand wants to be known as. They've even managed to secure themselves as a staple of the Holiday Season.

As summarised by the Professor of Brand Marketing at Birmingham University Business School, Leslie de Chernatony:" At the most basic, brands start life in brand planning documents, evolving as pan-company teams revise their ideas. Ultimately, after being finessed by stakeholders in the value chain, brands reside in the minds and hearts of consumers."

When it comes to building a brand, there are different ways to go about it. Some prefer to put more of the focus on the economic aspects, some on the cultural, but perhaps the most effective point of view is putting the focus on the consumer and giving the brand a persona. The personality approach puts the brand personality at the forefront of marketing. It puts value onto giving the brand human characteristics, like energetic, youthful, refined, tenacious, and so on to make the brand a mirror for consumers to see themselves in or aspire to. The personality approach to branding goes off of people's desire to make purchases not just based on product qualities, but as a form of self-expression as well. It has been shown that consumers are more engaged with and loyal to brands that have a clear brand personality than with brands that have a weak one or none at all. (Tilde, Charlotte, Mogens 2009.)

Much of the value of a brand is in how the narrative around the product or service makes the consumer feel about themselves. In creating a new brand, a company must first consider who is their audience and narrow it down as specific as possible. Consider their troubles, dreams, aspirations, and goals instead of only their age and location. Start by imagining the audience as one person and then from that mirror qualities to be represented by the brand. Characterize the brand as someone the target audience would want to be

friends with, see themselves in, or become like. Keep this characterization in mind in the way you communicate, visual representation, the colors you use, the slogan, the logo, choosing the staff, the typography, shapes, physical space, interior, and so on. Everything that makes for the customer experience should exude the brand personality.

*I don't think we need to be altruistic, but I think we need to be "sometruistic." Meaning we are true to some people. For some people, they can't believe how great this thing we made is. For some people, they would cross the street to get it. And if I go down the list of modern brands, that is true for all of them. [...] and so what can you do to make a bigger impact is you can be "sometruistic," you can be obsessed with some people and make them so happy to hear from you, that they open your email, that they call you on the phone, they wait in line to see you at the booth, that they tell their friends and they tell their friends and tell their friends. That begins with someone caring enough to have the grit to say we're going to make good stuff, not lousy stuff. (Godin 2018.)*

Another example of a strong brand that has a clear brand personality is RedBull. They upload videos on social media of people doing extravagant things like parkour, snowboarding off of cliffs, skateboarding- and motocross tricks, etc. They even did a parachute jump from space.

But why? 99% of their communication through social media has nothing to do with energy drinks per se. It's simply because that's the audience they want to appeal to. They want to be associated with the image of living excitingly and daringly. So, when you communicate through your company social media ask yourself: what is the purpose of the content? Who is it for? How will they feel? What kind of tone should I use?

A good brand is helpful when trying to reach new customers, and it is essential that brand building is taken seriously, as it makes marketing and selling your product or service much easier.

As we are talking about social media in this work, we need to emphasize how important it is for a company to properly communicate the brand through social media as well.

### 3.1 Brand management and turning customers into fans

As much as putting careful thought into building a brand, it is also important to manage it afterward. Your brand needs to be changing and adapting with the times.

A good brand attracts people; these people we can call potential customers. Of course, customers are something every company needs, but one could also argue that customers are also a bad thing. At least when we are looking at this from the point of view of a successful brand.

Why are customers bad for a brand? Customers have a choice, and customers will go somewhere else. What we want is for our customers to be our fans. (Dickinson 2013.) This is why it is crucial that the company would be able to turn these customers into fans of the brand and the company. A fan won't abandon something they like as quickly. Fans also want to support and buy the company's products and services. So, cherish the loyal customers that show their support to your brand and give them some extra attention by giving access to a private Facebook group and engage in the conversations had there, give them discounts and ways to access exclusive content, for example. Look into what people are saying about your brand. Go through mentions and like and comment on some of those posts. Don't just sell and push your product in people's faces. Build a good relationship with your customers, and you will have a strong following that will, in return, go the extra mile for you too and advocate your product to their friends free of cost, which is still one of the most trusted initiators of action. This is also why social media algorithms favor posts that spark lots of engagement, as it is the digital equivalent of people saying: "I trust this brand", "this is a good product".

Social media can be a beneficial tool when it comes to brand management; today, the youth follow a lot of social media influencers, who have become celebrities. Of course, not everyone can achieve this. Companies and businesses can, however, learn from them to an extent and start producing content that engages and attracts bigger audiences and therefore grows the brand's social media channels.

### 3.2 Brand communication in Social Media

Brand communication is a key aspect of managing and handling a brand. Through brand communication, you inform, persuade, enlighten, teach, and remind all the followers and stakeholders about what your brand has to offer (Bhasin 2019).

When comparing brand communication in social media to brand communication in other media, we can say that communicating through social media is more convenient for the following reasons:

1. Sharing information is easier and cheaper
2. Information travels faster and more effortlessly

3. Communication through social media allows way more room for personalization
4. The message shared through social media can be either text, video, sound, or image.  
Or all of them at once
5. There are no “business hours” – the information can be shared at any given time, and it travels all around the world instantly



## 4 INSTAGRAM CONTENT AND COMPETITION RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to give the case company some keys and insights on how they should grow their Instagram and other social media channels. The study made was completed by using Instagram, and the goal was to grow the following, engage the audience and grow the company's Instagram account as a whole. The content uploaded during the study was meant to be authentic, entertaining and something that makes the person watching want to follow the channel.

In the following parts, we are going to talk about some methods and studies we used to try and grow the company's Instagram channel.

### 4.1 Research methods

The research methods used in this thesis are both quantitative and qualitative, leaning on the quantitative. The research we conducted consists of two parts: a study about the performance of different promotion campaigns, that were implemented during the internship at Company X and a survey study about the preferences of our target group.

The quantitative research method uses numbers and statistics to explain and interpret analysed subjects. It relies on gathered statistics and uses graphs to express the findings. This research method is effective in explaining and visualising comparisons, cause-and-effect-relationships, categorisations, etc. (Jyväskylän Yliopisto 2015.) This was the method we chose to use as we wanted to study the performance of different promotion campaigns, so we thought an effective way to do this was by gathering key data about their performance during the management of the social media accounts of Company X. With this data we could effectively compare their performance against each other.

The qualitative research method studies the quality and meaning of a study subject on a more comprehensive scale, whereas quantitative research focuses more on the macro-level of things. The qualitative method often uses interviews to base its findings on and explains its findings in written cogitation. (Jyväskylän Yliopisto 2015.) This method was used in this thesis, in the last question of the survey study, where we encouraged the participants to freely express what they liked about esports and gaming related social media accounts, as an attempt to make sure we wouldn't overlook important insight that participants didn't get to express in the provided multiple-choice questions.

The following parts explain the study based on the data we gathered about the performance of different promotion campaigns of Company X. We are going to show and explain what was done and what were the results of the research.

## 4.2 Gaming video content

A series of gaming-related videos were posted on to the company's Instagram account. The video clips consist of short, under one-minute long videos. The videos used are funny, skillful, or different from the mass of gaming videos that the Internet is full of. For example, quite a few of the videos are solo performances of a single player, where they perform abnormally well.

These clips were gathered from streamers who the company collaborates with, and from clips that channel followers submitted to be published. The main purpose of these videos was to be entertaining and engaging for the followers of the channel.

### 4.2.1 Data analysis of gaming video content

The games used in the video clip series were the following: Apex Legends, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Fortnite, Overwatch, PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds, Rainbow Six: Siege, Hearthstone and Call of Duty.

To save space and to make it easier to read the chart below, the game names have been shortened as follows:

- Apex (Apex Legends)
- CS:GO (Counter-Strike: Global Offensive)
- PUBG (PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds)
- R6S (Rainbow Six: Siege)
- CoD (Call of Duty)

Table 1 – Data from the Instagram gaming video clips

Game	Amount of videos	Likes	Comments	Reach	Impressions
Apex	14	637	28	5971	10390
CS:GO	13	740	30	6278	10782
Fortnite	13	754	53	4784	8435
Overwatch	8	447	10	3663	6317
PUBG	5	197	11	5290	6967
R6S	1	43	0	385	631
Hearthstone	1	32	0	411	674
CoD	1	63	2	488	801

As we can see from the chart above, Fortnite has gained the most likes and comments, which tells us that Fortnite has been the most user and follower activating game. The game also has a relatively young player base, which can also explain why it has more comments compared to the other games, as younger people are keener to comment and socialize on social media.

CS:GO and Apex, on the other hand, gain more Reach and Impressions. Reach means the number of individual people that have seen the post and Impressions mean the total number of times the post has been seen (including multiple plays by the same person). The published videoclips from these games are mostly solo plays, in which the player is doing something a bit unusual from normal gameplay, which seems interesting to people. We can also say that Overwatch is pretty much in the same category as these two games. R6S, CoD, and Heartstone all only had just one video posted, which makes analysing and comparing the results hard and unnecessary.

Gameplay videos proved to be problematic when it came to promoting them, since most of the games are first-person-shooter games, promoting them for profit became an issue with the Instagram promoting system, as it considers the video clips to be violent, which is against Instagram's guidelines, and therefore blocks the promotion of the videos. (Instagram 2020.)

### 4.3 Competition

One method of gaining followers we used was by holding Instagram competitions. As people are naturally competitive and interested in free stuff, holding a competition is a simple and easy way to gain people's attention, which is crucial, but no easy task on Instagram, which has over one billion users. That's a lot of potential customers, but it also means the platform is constantly being flooded with information, so being able to catch people's attention instantaneously is key. (Ng 2020.)

During the study, in total, eight competitions and contests were held on the company's Instagram channel. In two of those, no money was used on the promotion of the post, which has to be taken into consideration while analysing the results.

The prizes for these contests were different products, event tickets, and restaurant gift cards. The prizes won't be mentioned more specifically, so during this analysis, only the

price of the products will be mentioned. This is because by doing it this way, it's easier to analyse whether the value of the prize affects the number of participants.

The held competitions lasted around one to two weeks each, depending on the prize and the value of it.

#### 4.3.1 Guidelines for Instagram competitions

As competitions and contests involve products that have a monetary value, the guidelines and rules must be explained clearly in the contest post. Also, of course, the rules of the contest must follow the laws of the country in which the competition is being held. In this case, the country is Finland.

Instagram has its own promotion guidelines, but maybe two of the most important ones are that the contest description must include the rules, terms and eligibility requirements and that you have to mention that your competition, contest, raffle, etc., is not sponsored or associated with Instagram in any way (Instagram 2020).

There are many ways to do Instagram contests and competitions. For this study, a like/comment/follow contest type was used. It means that to be able to participate, the user has to like and comment on the contest post and to follow the account that made the post. This is common engagement encouragement, as the Instagram algorithm highly favours posts with the most engagement, meaning your post is more likely to show up on people's discover page, and your ads are shown to more people if it evokes a reaction.

#### 4.3.2 Contest results

The following analysis will include CPC, CPM, and CTR rates, which were explained in previous theory chapter 2. Digital- and Social media marketing.

According to Adstage's statistics, in Q2 of 2019, the average Instagram CPC, CPM, and CTR rates were the following: CPC (0,59€), CPM (5,40€), and CTR (0,88%) (Lambert 2019).

As the amount of money used for the promotion and prizes is classified information, those won't be mentioned. For prizes, a numbering system from 1 to 3 will be used. (Number 3 is the highest value and number 1 the lowest). The amount of money used for promotions will not be mentioned.

CPC, CPM and CTR values will not be mentioned, but instead will be referred to according to this scale:

Table 2 – A rating system for CPC and CPM

Rating	CPC	CPM
Good	< 0,59 €	< 5,40 €
Average	+ - 0,12 € (20%)	+ - 1,08 € (20%)
Bad	> 0,59 €	> 5,40 €

As can be seen in the chart above, the lower the CPC and CPM rate is, the better the promotion has done. Also, the higher the CTR rate is, the better. For the purpose of this study, we set the average rating to be plus or minus 20% from the average amount according to Adstage's statistics.

Table 3 – Data from the contest posts (\*-marked, no money used on promotion)

Competition number	Prize value	Likes	Comments	Promo-tion clicks	Profile visits	Reach	Impres-sions	Promo-tion spend	Follows	CPC (€)	CPM (€)	CTR (%)
1	3	2455	110	441	617	22748	40525	X€	93	Good	Good	108,82
2	2	1540	117	173	214	21260	30775	X€	20	Bad	Bad	56,51
3	2	361	29	24	49	3150	4179	X€	3	Bad	Good	80,69
4	1	346	100	116	139	4859	7805	X€	18	Good	Good	149
5	1	218	133	15	70	1988	246	X€	43	Good	Good	99
6	1	761	50	69	130	5897	8551	X €	12	Good	Good	0,81
7*	1	67	60	0	17	457	857	0	1	0	0	0
8*	1	43	0	0	11	551	861	0	1	0	0	0

In the chart above, you can see all the information regarding all contests held. For now, we ignore the contest number 7 and 8, since there wasn't any money used to promote them.

Let's analyse the three best performing contest posts. These were numbers 1, 4, and 6.

Contest number one had the most valuable item as a prize, the amount of money used on promotion was also the highest. The post reached 22 748 individual people, and it was

seen 40 525 times in total. During the promotion, it brought 93 new followers to the page. The post has 2455 likes and 110 comments.

The CPC, CPM and CTR rates are better than average on this post, according to the Ad-stage's statistics.

Contests four and six had the same prize, and the same like/comment/follow contest method was used. The only difference is the amount of money used on promotion. As number 6 has around 50% more money used. We can see that this affects the results right away. With 50% more money used, contest number 6 reached 1038 more people than contest number 4. The reason is logical, the more money you use on promotions, the more people Instagram's algorithm will show the post to.

Both of these posts are doing well in the CPC, CPM, and CTR rates. Although post number six has a bit lower CTR rate than average.

During the research, two competitions had no money used on the promotion of them. The effect of that can clearly be seen in the number of likes, comments, reach, and impressions. As mentioned before, the Instagram algorithm works like this in a nutshell: the more money you use on promotion, the more reach your post will gain. Here the drastic effect is concretely proven. If you want to effectively promote on social media, you have to make a budget for it. This shouldn't discourage you too much, as marketing on these platforms can be very effective and is relatively cheap and effortless compared to traditional forms of marketing. Take television ads, for example, the price is many times over the price of an Instagram ad, but the reach and evoked action much lower.

## 5 SURVEY STUDY

In this section, we are going to look at a study we conducted concerning the social media usage habits of those with interest in esports. The research was done by using Google Forms, and it was shared on the Discord server of company X that has over 1000 users on it. The age group is relatively young, from 13 to 20-year-olds. However, this age group is very active on social media, so for the survey, the target group is perfect. We managed to get 50 answers, and it gave a good idea of what kinds of things this demographic is after.

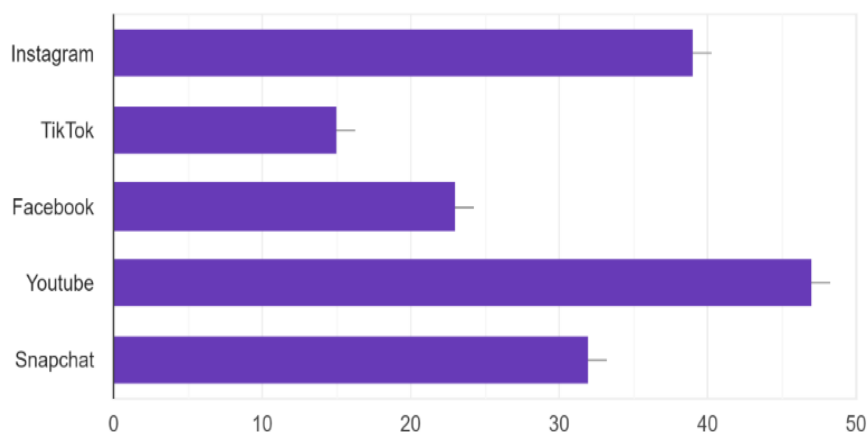
We will go through each question, look at the answers, and what it means to social media marketers. We chose to do a quantitative study, with one last qualitative question because we believed a short, anonymous survey, with a prize, would have the lowest barrier to partake in and thus give us the most answers to conclude from. The things we wanted to know from the followers were applicable to this form of study and yielded some useful insight.

### 5.1 Data Analysis

Graph 1 – Question one results: Which of the following do you use?

Mitä seuraavista käytät?

50 vastausta



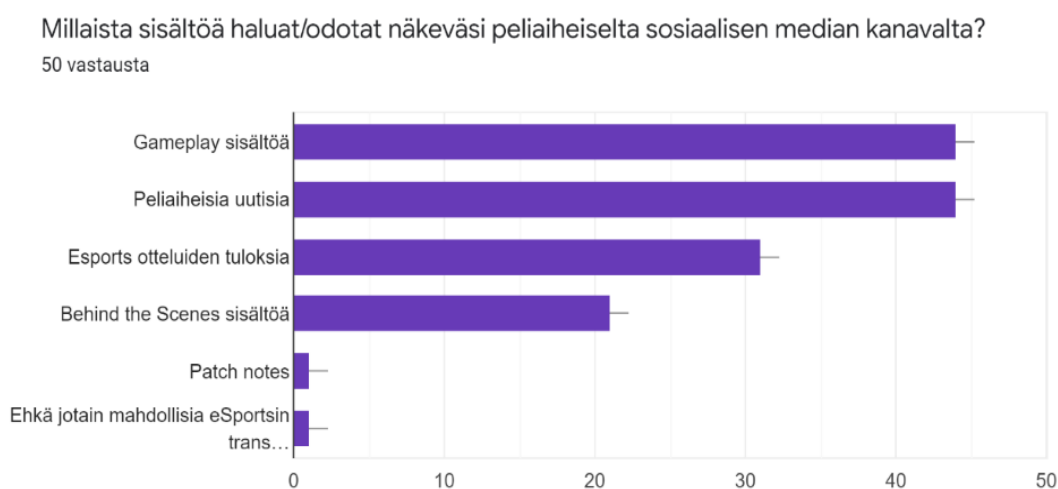
First, we established which social media platforms are most popular among the test group, and as we suspected, Instagram is in a strong position second only to the video broadcasting platform YouTube. TikTok's growing popularity has not yet caught on to the

Finnish market as strong as the rest of the world and was used by only a 5th of our test group. Facebook is used by less than half of the participants, and Snapchat came out as the third most popular.

Here we can conclude that video is the most consumed format of esports related content, and thus it is highly recommendable to consider either creating content to YouTube or advertise on YouTube.

Instagram attracts a large audience as well and is ideal for quickly attention-grabbing short videos, but through the Instagram TV feature offers an extension of that content to a longer, more in-depth format as well. As a major plus for a social media marketer, Instagram offers an Insight tool, through which useful demographic and performance statistics can be analysed in real-time. Making advertising campaigns for specific groups of people and A/B testing easy and simple on Instagram and can be extended to Facebook too.

Graph 2 – Question two results: What kind of content do you want to see from a game-related social media account?



Gameplay and game-related news were tied in this category, with 44 votes each, holding the clear majority. One person expanded that they would like to see transfer news, which means when a player switches to another team or a new member joins a group.

Thirty-one people wanted to see esports game results, and 21 people voted for behind the scenes related updates.

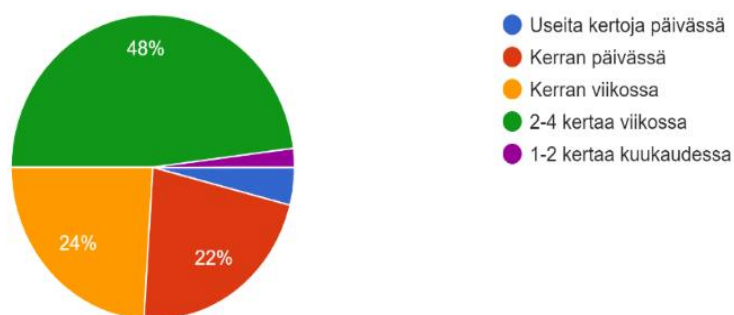
We got another expansion, wishing to see patch notes, which are explanations of game updates and fixes, detailing what has changed.



Graph 3 – Question three results: How often do you expect updates from the accounts you follow?

Kuinka usein odotat seuraamasi kanavan julkaisevan uutta sisältöä?

50 vastausta

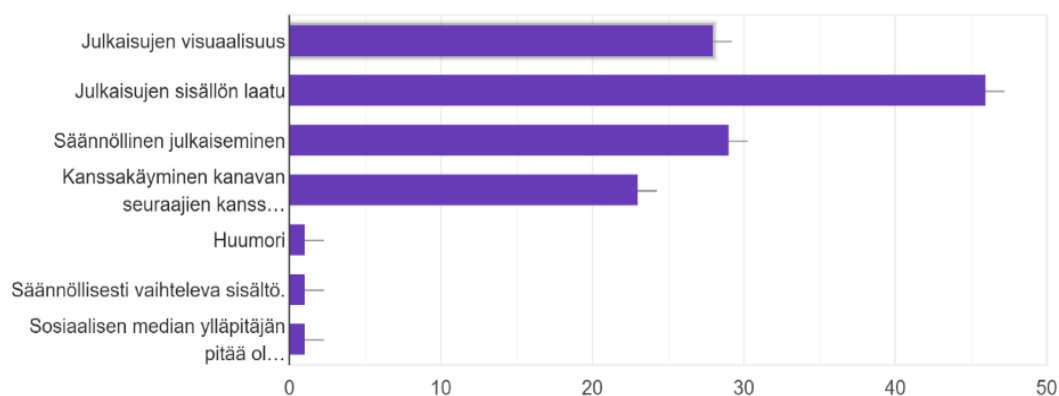


Nearly half of the participants estimated 2-4 times a week to be the ideal amount. The options “once a week” and “once a day” have almost equal backing, but half compared to the majority vote’s popularity. Only two people voted for multiple times a day, which indicates that most people might consider this amount of updates excessive and a nuisance. Also, not surprisingly, once a month is too seldom to hold most people’s attention, gathering only one vote.

Graph 4 – Question four results: Which of the following do you find most important to a game-related account? (Choose 3)

Mikä mielestäsi on tärkeintä peliaihteiselle kanavalle? (Valitse 3)

50 vastausta

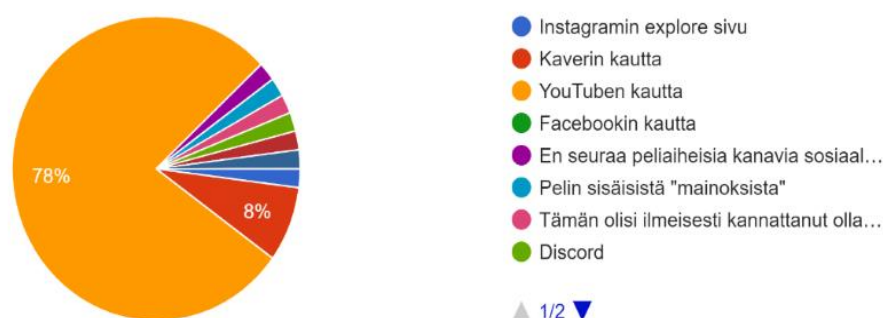


As our fourth question, we wanted to find out about the participant's preferences concerning content. We found that quality and quantity are the most important, but quality does trump quantity by a noticeable margin. Wrapped in a visually consistent and appealing package, with some interaction and engagement of the followers and enough humor to keep things entertaining, seems to make up the ideal recipe for social media content creation.

Nearly all (except for four people) chose 'quality of the content' as one of their three picks. After which, 'regular uploads' and 'visual appeal' took second and third place, with a one-vote difference (29 and 28 votes respectively). 'Interaction with followers, for example through the comments section' came last out of the ready options, although it too was supported by nearly half of the participants (23 votes). On top of this, two people added humour related comments, and one person brought up the matter of regularly changing content.

Graph 5 – Question five results: Through which avenues have you discovered the esports related Instagram accounts you follow?

Mitä kautta olet löytänyt seuraamasi peliaihteiset kanavat?  
50 vastausta



The clear majority (78%) of the participants have found the game-related Instagram accounts they follow through YouTube. YouTube being a significant platform for more extended gameplay and game discussion related content, and replacing television for most young people, it attracts people to watch videos of their interest and through it trickle down to other social media platforms of the YouTubers. Therefore, as mentioned before, it

would be worth considering to either start a YouTube channel, if it fits your format, or investing in YouTube ads.

The second most common way of finding Instagram channels to follow (8%) is through word of mouth. This again shows that even after all the new developments in technology, leaving a good impression and engaging followers is worthwhile. Thinking of ways to make followers loyal advocates by creating genuine value for them rather than just pushing a product, should be something on every social media marketer's mind.

The rest of the options gathered no more than one vote per option. However, as this was not a multiple-choice question, we can see that YouTube is the most common way of finding new channels to follow, but not necessarily the only way, as one of the participants pointed out in their answer "through all" in the 'other comments' section.

Question 6: Lastly, with your own words, please tell us your favourite esports social media account and what you like about it.

To conclude the survey, we asked the participants to tell us their current favourites and what made them stand out. The main similarities and learning points we were able to gather from the answers were as such:

Followers undoubtedly gravitate towards content creators that entertainingly provide informative and useful content on a regular basis. They want inside looks, game-play highlights, and other short clips, real-time news, a community, the effort put into editing, and other audio-visual efforts put toward a more immersive and entertaining experience.

Though short clips are more commonly appreciated, there is space for more in-depth content such as podcasts that can be consumed casually in the background while doing something else.

How exactly this applies, depends on the specific company. However, regardless of the kind of content you want to put out, the qualifications for an eye-catching social media content provider stay the same: people want quality content regularly. "Quality content" we found can be broken down further to informative and entertaining.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS FROM BOTH STUDIES

In the gameplay video research, we found that the videos about games that have a high player base, according to the game publishers are doing better in social media. As common sense says, popular things are more liked.

The Instagram algorithm also has its way of affecting this. For example, Fortnite is a hugely successful game, and there are lots of posts and videos of it online. The Instagram algorithm knows this, and therefore it follows the hashtags used in a post to direct new Fortnite related content to the people who are most likely to watch and enjoy them.

Of course, as there is a lot of similar posts from the same game, the algorithm only favours the videos and posts that it thinks are “good.” Now, this is where the post quality, promoting, and the audience comes into play. If you promote your content by using money, of course, more people are going to see it since you are paying Instagram for that. If many people see the post in a short period of time, it grows the chance of the algorithm to “notice” it. Also, if your audience is liking, commenting, sharing, saving your posts, it tells the algorithm that: “hey, this is a good post, I should show this to more people.” For every channel, an engaging audience is more valuable than gold. Getting people to share your content is one of the most effective ways to appeal to the algorithm and get exposure. There are some ways that have been found to get people to be more likely to do so. These are:

- Including exclusive information. People want to feel like they’re in on something others don’t know about
- Reminders of a regular occurrence. For example, make a hashtag you use regularly (e.g. on a specific day of the week) for a specific purpose, that others can easily relate to and partake in
- Posts that appeal to emotions. No one can resist cute animals
- Informative and useful posts
- Stories. Being drawn to a good story has been in our DNA since we were able to communicate in words

(Digimarkkinointi.fi 2020.)

Competitions, where the audience can win physical products, work well in raising your channels engagement rate and getting new people to find your account. Doing competitions and contests often, also means that it can become quite expensive at times, as you have to spend money on the actual prizes and the promotion of the posts. Of course, all marketing costs if you want to do it at a professional level, but this kind of “bribery” can only get you so far. You might get people to follow you and engage with your post to in return possibly be able to win a prize, but it will not keep them there if the content you provide isn’t up to par. Keep this in mind and only use contests as a tool to grow awareness of your account, but make sure that people will be delighted they found you by making your content worthwhile.

Using money on Instagram promotions means more reach for the post compared to organic posts, which is logical. If we compare this to a “classic way of advertisement,” we can see that the result is the same. The more money you use on promoting your stuff, the more people can see it.

Of course, there are other factors to consider when it comes to effective social media marketing than just reach. If your goal is to gain brand awareness, you should focus on reach, as in exposing your brand to as many new eyes as possible.

This is to get your name known and to then build upon, but if you are in the stage of converting people as new followers, you shouldn’t just go for reach, but to make your target group as likely to execute the desired outcome, by using the appropriate promotion type.

For example, Facebook Business Manager, which Instagram can be connected to, offers such goals as “boost your post”, “get more leads” or “get more website visitors”. You can also try to utilize a look-alike audience, which is an option that Instagram and Facebook offers that promotes your ad to people that have similar interests and characteristics as people that already follow you and engage with your posts, to ensure a higher rate of conversion, than if the ad was just going for reach. The post might not be shown to as many people but instead shown multiple times to people more likely to engage with it.

From the results of the content posting research, we can say that both of the two different content styles tested (gameplay videos and competitions) work when the goal is to grow your follower interactions and follower base on Instagram. From the two types we tested, the contests and competitions seem to be working better for this. It is logical since the competition posts give away free stuff, and it tells that to be able to participate, the user has to follow, like, comment, and share the post to be able to win the prize.

The tips to be concluded from our survey study can be summarized as follows: YouTube and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms among gaming enthusiasts. Gameplay and gaming news were found to be the most popular type of content. 2-4 times a week is a good schedule for updates. Multiple times a day, however, is too often. Quality of the content is key, which we found consists of a good balance of informative and entertaining. YouTube is the main source from which users find Instagram accounts to follow. Word of mouth being second.

## 7 SUMMARY

In this study, we found that the most stable way to gain followers and follower engagement is to make good, authentic, quality content that is interesting for the audience on a regular basis, as well as through building a strong brand. To find out the follower's preferences a survey can be conducted, although here it was mainly conducted for the purpose of being able to analyse the results for this thesis. More practical ways might include learning from what works for other similar accounts, following what people say about you and related topics on social media, and analysing performance data from promotional campaigns as well as the general activity of the social media accounts.

Gameplay videos are popular content, which was the chosen format used in the research. However, making them is time-consuming, and the material used has to be good in quality and content-wise to stand out from the masses of similar content.

Organic posts don't measure up to paid promotions unless you have something truly new and exciting to share, with some luck as well that make you go viral without the extra push from the algorithms. However, if you are looking to do social media marketing professionally, a budget is necessary, as paid promotions are always prioritized by social media algorithms and will help you multiply the visibility of your post.

It is also essential for social media, to get your audience to interact and engage with the content and posts, as it tells the algorithm that your posts are good, and it starts to show it to more and more people. That can be considered a free promotion for your posts.

Our research question for this thesis was the following: "How to improve social media content to make it more appealing to followers." Here are the points we would suggest after the research:

Find out what your followers want to see; conduct a survey or do research some other way. Also, when you have a strong brand personality, it will naturally attract the right kinds of people. When you start making the content, make sure that it is good quality, interesting, and engaging. Add a call-to-action to encourage engagement and make the content snappy, so it catches attention instantly. Plan the content you make according to what your followers want to see. Analyse results, listen to feedback, conduct A/B testing, tweak your operations accordingly and rinse-and-repeat.

We think a good way to further research this subject would be to focus on A/B testing. Making several A/B testing campaigns in different parts of the customer acquisition funnel,

for example, and analysing what works, what doesn't, and why that might be. This would surely make for an interesting and useful continuation on the subject.



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Figure 1: Question 1 – Which of the following do you use?

Mitä seuraavista käytät?

50 vastausta

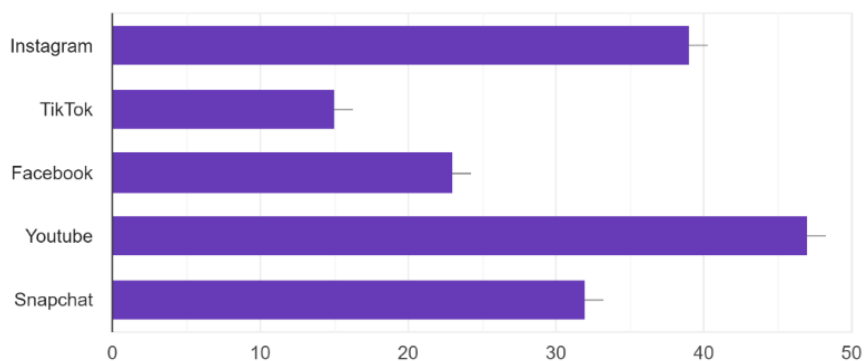


Figure 2: Question number 2 - Which of the following types of content do you most expect to see from an esports social media channel?

Millaista sisältöä haluat/odotat näkeväsi peliaiheiselta sosiaalisen median kanavalta?

50 vastausta

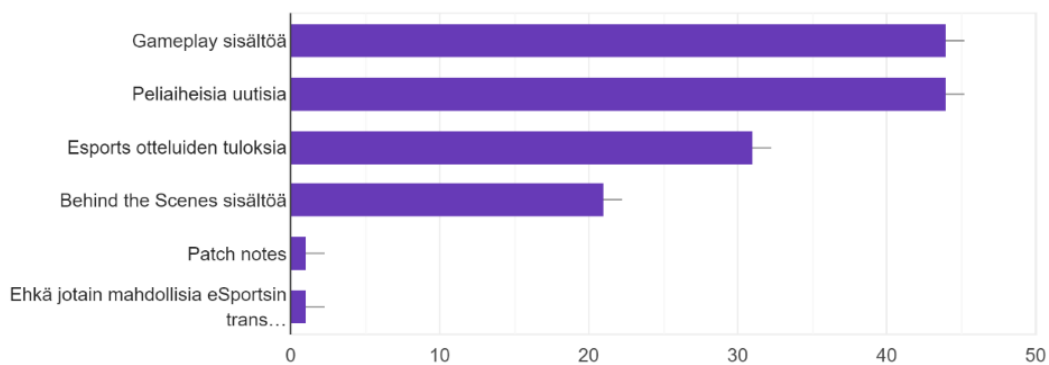


Figure 3: Question number 3 - How often do you expect a social media channel to post?

Kuinka usein odotat seuraamasi kanavan julkaisevan uutta sisältöä?

50 vastausta

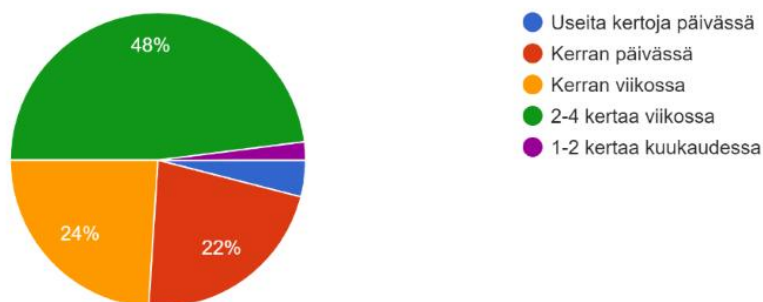


Figure 4 - Question number 4: Which of the following do you find the most important to a gaming channel? (choose 3).

Mikä mielestäsi on tärkeintä peliaiheiselle kanavalle? (Valitse 3)

50 vastausta

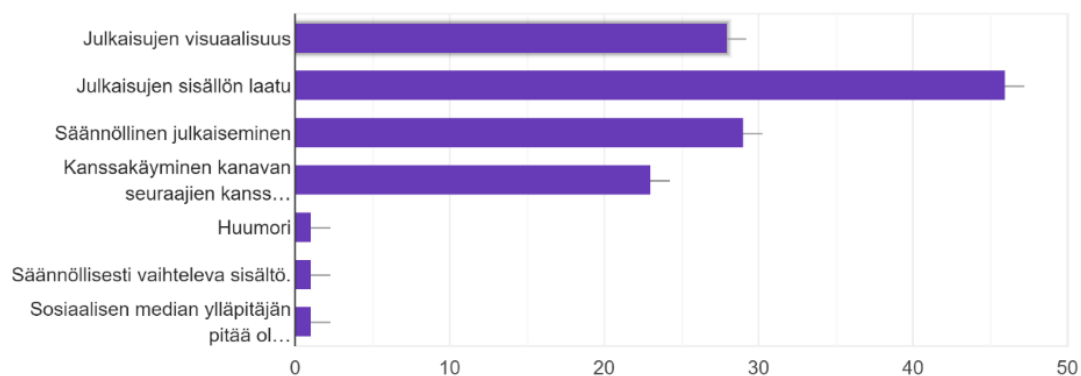
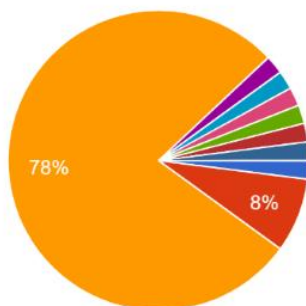


Figure 5 - Question number 5: Through which avenue have you found the gaming channels you currently follow?



Mitä kautta olet löytänyt seuraamasi peliaihteiset kanavat?

50 vastausta



- Instagramin explore sivu
- Kaverin kautta
- YouTubea kautta
- Facebookin kautta
- En seuraa peliaihteisiä kanavia sosiaal...
- Pelin sisäisistä "mainoksista"
- Tämän olisi ilmeisesti kannattanut olla...
- Discord

▲ 1/2 ▼